National Autistic Society

I am autistic

A short guide to getting a diagnosis as an adult, accessing support and knowing your rights

The benefits of getting a diagnosis

There are an estimated 700,000 autistic people in the UK and many adults are undiagnosed. A diagnosis can help autistic people and their families understand a lifetime of feeling different and why they are facing difficulties. It can also make it easier to access the services, benefits and support they need and are entitled to at home, work, college or university.

Common autistic characteristics:

- communication issues, from not speaking to needing more time to process information
- repetitive behaviour and routines and difficulty with unexpected change
- anxiety in social situations and difficulty interacting with others
- sensory sensitivity to light, touch, sound or smell
- intense and highly focused interests.

Getting a GP referral and diagnosis

If you feel you may be autistic, ask your GP for a diagnosis referral. Not all GPs have in-depth knowledge of autism, so give clear examples of any difficulties you have had with the above characteristics as a child or adult. Show them 'Your GP's responsibilities' at www.autism.org.uk/pre-diagnosis/adults to explain their duty to refer you for a diagnosis to a psychiatrist, clinical psychologist or multi disciplinary team.

www.autism.org.uk/pre-diagnosis/adults

Your right to support

If you think you or a member of your family has care and support needs, your local authority has a duty to carry out a needs assessment. This could lead to you receiving personal or residential care, or support with day-to-day life.

www.autism.org.uk/socialcare

"My late diagnosis was a revelation. It explained so much of my behaviour, and sense of not fitting in."

Rachael Lucas, author of The State of Grace and autistic woman

Applying for benefits

Autism is recognised as a disability in the UK, meaning many autistic people will qualify for benefits like Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Universal Credit. Carers of autistic adults can apply for Carer's Allowance and become appointees to complete claim forms and manage benefits for an adult child. **www.autism.org.uk/adults-benefits**

Employment, training and finding work

Finding and keeping work can be hard due to lack of understanding from managers and colleagues as well as sensory and stress management issues. All employers in the UK have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments. Your employer can contact our Employment Training Team to help with this. If you are looking for work, a good place to start is your Jobcentre Plus, Access to Work or the National Careers Service or national equivalent. **www.autism.org.uk/employment**

Adult services, residential care and community support

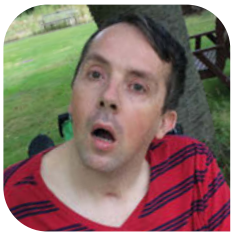
Autism is a spectrum condition. This means autistic people have varying and complex support needs. Your local authority should have a list of services in your area. We run 80 care services and centres for autistic adults, including day centres and residential care as well as supported living and outreach services. These may be funded by your local authority, via a needs assessment. **www.autism.org.uk/services**

Further and higher education and student support

Colleges and universities have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting disabled students at a disadvantage. If you are studying at university or college, you can apply for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) to pay for support, equipment or travel costs. You may also be entitled to claim some benefits. Our Transition Support Service offers free advice and information for autistic teenagers transitioning to adulthood, including starting and finishing further and higher education. **www.autism.org.uk/transitionsupport**

Local branches and volunteering

We have 116 volunteer-led branches up and down the country. That means 75% of the UK population lives within 20 miles of a group of understanding and experienced individuals who can provide support and advice for autistic people and their families. Visit our website to find your local branch and get in touch. We also have a wide range of volunteering opportunities and fun events on offer across the UK. **www.autism.org.uk/branches**



Meet Ian

Ian was diagnosed at the age of 39 after experiencing mental health issues and struggling to find work. His diagnosis allowed him to apply for Employment Support Allowance. Like many autistic people, Ian was initially unaware that he was entitled to benefits.

Meet Erin

Erin is a 26-year-old autistic woman who currently works as a campaigns assistant. She has worked closely with her employers to ensure she receives clear communication and guidance in her role. Your employer can contact our Employment Training Team at **www.autism.org.uk/employers**

Meet Mike

Mike was diagnosed as autistic when he was eight years old. He has used several of our services and now 'wants to give back'. A talented musician, Mike leads a volunteer music session at one of our services for adults with complex needs.

Meet Safiya

Safiya is a young autistic woman who has volunteered for us at the National Autistic Society in our social media team. Safiya has experienced bullying and abuse in the past and wants to help raise awareness and be an advocate for autistic people.
www.autism.org.uk/volunteer

For more information on all of our services:

visit our website at **www.autism.org.uk**

Stay in touch with like-minded people

79% of autistic people have told us they sometimes feel isolated. Our online community is a great way to contact some of the 700,000 autistic people in the UK. You can hear their stories, share yours and keep up-to-date on all the latest developments, legislation and news.

http://community.autism.org.uk

www.twitter.com/Autism

www.facebook.com/NationalAutisticSociety

Join Chris Packham and our 22,000 members

The National Autistic Society was set up in 1962 by a group of parents, including Lorna Wing who coined the term 'the autistic spectrum'. Since then, our membership has grown to 22,000 and, as well as belonging to the UK's leading charity for autistic people, members receive:

- our quarterly *Your Autism* magazine
- exclusive member offers and discounts to the Autism Shows in London, Birmingham and Manchester
- an invitation to our Annual General Meeting where you can help shape the future direction of the charity.

Become a member today at **www.autism.org.uk/membership**

28 years of autistic art and thought – now online

The Spectrum has been written for and by autistic people since 1993. The magazine is now available online where you can access all issues. It is a unique archive of modern autistic prose, poetry and art.
www.autism.org.uk/theSpectrum

"The best way to create a society that works for autistic people, is to join one."

Chris Packham, animal enthusiast, autistic man and National Autistic Society ambassador and honorary member

National Autistic Society
Transforming lives and changing attitudes since 1962

- Our website, 116 local volunteer-led branches, online community and specialist helplines provide information, support and practical advice to hundreds of autistic people and their families every day.
- We train over 11,000 teachers, health workers and other professionals every year to help ensure schools, health services and workplaces meet the needs of autistic people.
- Our *Too Much Information* campaign has reached 65 million people, helping to increase understanding of the difficulties autistic people face every day.
- In 2009, we led a campaign to persuade the Government to introduce the first ever Autism Act in England that guarantees the rights of autistic adults.
- More than 300 organisations, including schools and care services, have achieved Autism Accreditation, our quality standard to recognise best autism practice.

With your help, we can do even more. Find out how you can become a member and other ways to support our charity at **www.autism.org.uk**

National Autistic Society

The National Autistic Society is a charity registered in England and Wales (269425) and in Scotland (SC039427)
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